

**Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Field Release of *Aulacidea acroptilonica* (Hymenoptera: Cynipidae), an Insect for Biological
Control of Russian Knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), in the Continental United States
June 2008**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is proposing to issue permits for release of a gall wasp, *Aulacidea acroptilonica* V. Bel. (Hymenoptera: Cynipidae). The agent would be used by the applicant and any future permittees for the biological control of Russian knapweed, *Acroptilon (Centaurea) repens* (L.) DC, in the continental United States. APHIS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes the potential environmental consequences of this action. The EA is available from:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health inspection Service
Plant Protection and Quarantine
Permits, Registrations, Imports and Manuals
4700 River Road, Unit 133
Riverdale, MD 20737

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/biocontrol_weeds.shtml

The EA analyzed the following two alternatives in response to the need to control Russian knapweed and contain infestations: (1) no action, and (2) issue permits for the release of *A. acroptilonica* for biological control of Russian knapweed. A third alternative, to issue permits with special provisions or requirements concerning release procedures or mitigating measures, was considered. However, this alternative was dismissed because no issues were raised that indicated that special provisions or requirements were necessary. The No Action alternative, as described in the EA, would likely result in the continued use at the current level of chemical, cultural, and biological control methods for the management of Russian knapweed. These control methods described are not alternatives for decisions to be made by APHIS, but are presently being used to control Russian knapweed in the United States and may continue regardless of permit issuance for field release of *A. acroptilonica*. Notice of the EA was made available in the Federal Register on April 24, 2008 for a 30-day public comment period. No comments were received on the EA.

I have decided to authorize the PPQ permit unit to issue permits for the environmental release of *A. acroptilonica*. The reasons for my decision are:

- This biological control agent is sufficiently host specific and poses little, if any, threat to the biological resources of the continental United States.
- The release will have no effect on federally listed threatened and endangered species or their habitats in the continental United States.
- *A. acroptilonica* poses no threat to the health of humans or wild or domestic animals.

- No negative cumulative impacts are expected from release of *A. acroptilonica*.
- There are no disproportionate adverse effects to minorities, low-income populations, or children in accordance with Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations" and Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks."
- While there is not total assurance that the release of *A. acroptilonica* into the environment will be reversible, there is no evidence that this organism will cause any adverse environmental effects.

An environmental impact statement (EIS) must be prepared if implementation of the proposed action may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. I have determined that there would be no significant impact to the human environment from the implementation of any of the action alternatives and, therefore, no EIS needs to be prepared.



Dr. Michael J. Firko
Director
Permits, Registrations, Imports, and Manuals
APHIS Plant Health Programs
Plant Protection and Quarantine



Date